



Sig File 1-4-18

Charles E. Coulson
Lake County Prosecuting Attorney

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BD. OF CO COMM
LAKE CO., OHIO

December 7, 2017
Commissioners

APPROVED

PRESIDENT

of
Lake County, Ohio

Attest

CLERK

Mr. Jerry C. Cirino, President
Mr. John R. Hamercheck
Mr. Daniel P. Troy
Lake County Board of Commissioners
105 Main Street
Painesville, OH 44077

RE: Request to place an additional levy on the 2018 Primary
Election ballot for the Lake County Crime Laboratory

Dear Commissioners:

As previously discussed, 2018 is the year in which our crime laboratory will have insufficient revenues to operate without substantial layoffs and a substantial decrease in laboratory services. If a levy is passed in May 2018, the revenue collections on the new levy may commence in 2019. I am hopeful that the general fund will subsidize our crime laboratory until the end of 2018 and will be reimbursed from the new levy funds.

Our last crime laboratory levy was on the ballot in 1999. With the exception of some small grants, the current .3 mill levy is the sole source of operating funds. Our crime laboratory of today is significantly different than our crime laboratory of 1999. The following are some of the reasons that it is significantly different.

- There has been a substantial increase in the number and the complexity of our laboratory's case load year after year, especially in the areas of drugs, toxicology (opioid epidemic), and DNA. Our laboratory now has a running backlog in every discipline.
- Our crime laboratory is subsidizing the prosecutor's office. To help hire additional personnel, the County Commissioners asked that crime laboratory funds be used to pay salaries in the prosecutor's office. The laboratory levy is now annually funding over \$410,000.00 in prosecutor's office salaries and benefits, relieving pressure on the general fund. This is not a complaint, nor do I say this in a negative light or infer that it should not have taken place. I merely point out that we have expanded the scope of our laboratory's budget.

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Jindsay T. Evans
Director

Mr. Jerry C. Cirino, President

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Mr. Daniel P. Troy

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- The cost of everything (supplies, equipment, and salaries) has increased. It is foreseeable that costs will continue to increase.

Several years ago, when I first began asking for an additional crime laboratory levy, I asked the auditor's office for estimates of how long different millage amounts would keep our laboratory solvent. I was told that a .5 mill levy should support the operation of our crime laboratory under its current conditions for another 12 to 15 years. I have recently been told that a .3 mill levy will keep our laboratory operational under its current conditions for approximately six years.

I am told that a .3 mill levy is likely the maximum amount that the Board of Commissioners will approve. This is better than nothing, but we must be aware that a .3 mill levy is less than desirable and only a stopgap measure. Before you make a final decision on the millage amount, I would like to point out the deficiencies of a .3 mill levy.

1. As long as the caseload, complexity of cases, and the opioid epidemic continues to increase every year, our crime laboratory cannot continue to operate at its current level. I am convinced that the opioid epidemic is going to get worse long before it gets better.
2. As long as science and technology continue to advance – touch DNA, 360 degree cameras, etc. – new equipment and personnel will need to be acquired.
3. We must anticipate the upcoming loss of experienced personnel through retirement. In the next few years, the Lake County Crime Laboratory will lose experienced scientists that cannot be replaced by hiring personnel out of college. Our laboratory will need to enter into a search for talent. A search for talent is useless if our laboratory does not have long-term financial stability. To recruit experienced scientists from other laboratories, long-term financial stability is necessary or scientists simply will not leave their current laboratory to come to ours. Long-term financial stability, combined with the intangible benefits of working for Lake County, will hopefully offset the fact that most crime laboratories pay higher salaries than our laboratory can offer.

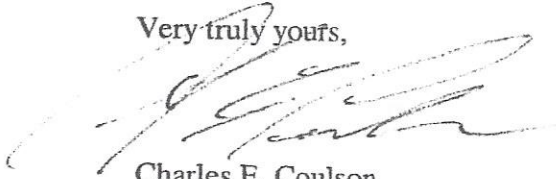
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At the risk of repeating myself, I want to remind you that our laboratory analyzes evidence not accepted by BCI and solves crimes for our residents that would otherwise go unsolved if Lake County law enforcement had to rely on BCI.

In order for our crime laboratory to survive, an additional levy is necessary. The long-term future of our crime laboratory is in your hands. Like long-term capital improvements, an investment in our crime laboratory is vital to a safe and secure Lake County in the years to come. If a .5 mill levy is not acceptable to you, please consider a .4 mill levy for our laboratory.

Please advise on the amount of the millage that you will approve. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Charles E. Coulson

CEC/ljn

cc: Michael Matas, Budget Director
Jason Boyd, County Administrator

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